Quail

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JOB COMPLETION REPORT

INVESTIGATIONS PROJECTS

State of Nebraska

Project No. 15-R Job No. 31-54

Title of Job: Winter Check of Bobwhite Quail Populations on Selected Areas

Objectives: To determine welfare through the winter period.

Techniques Used: Covey ranges were located during the fall and early winter. These ranges were visited during and following adverse winter conditions.

Findings: Other duties and poor road conditions curtailed the activities of this job. However the main quail range in southeastern Nebraska experienced a rather mild winter.

While on the duck trapping and banding assignment near Leshara on the Platte River five coveys of quail were located the first week in January. The winter had been very mild up to this time. Six inches of snow fell on January 17th and 18th and 2 inches on the 21st. Night-time temperatures dropped to 5 to 10 above. One covey left its previous location and could not be found. Another covey moved 300 to 400 yards to available soy beans and was apparently well situated. A third covey was hard pressed for food and was wandering up to 100 yards from cover into a snowed-in cornfield. The nine birds were still intact on the 24th and were capable of strong flight. A fourth covey was well situated and the 12 birds were apparently faring well. The other covey was not checked again.

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In Otoe County, near Syracuse only one of four coveys located in November could be found on the 14th of February. Six of the 20 birds were taken during the open season. The 13 remaining birds appeared healthy and were capable of strong flight. One covey would have been poorly situated had they remained where they were in November. A creek bottom less than one half mile away offered both food and cover. Recent sign was seen in the locality of the other two coveys, but the birds were not found.

Recommendations: It is recommended that this job be repeated the next winter.

Summary: The winter of 1954-1955 was mild. The eight inches of snow that fell during the week of January 16th and the near zero nights that followed were the most adverse conditions of the winter. The snow cover was apparently causing some coveys to travel farther for food. The short period of complete ground cover was not of sufficient duration to be critical for quail in southeastern Nebraska.

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